

Take Me Home

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Summary: Magnus and Alec are faced with a sudden tragedy. Based on the writing prompt, 'finding out one of them has a terminal illness' so prepare your souls before reading this. Seriously.

Take Me Home

A/N: I literally have no emotions left. Bye.

Also I do not advise listening to 'Saturn' by Sleeping at Last, or 'Take me Home' by Jess Glynne.

Which means you should. For maximum heartbreak.

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Magnus becomes instantly worried when Alec forgets his own 40th birthday. Alec, who has over five colour-coded diaries monitoring items such as demon activity, Clave events, and birthdays, forgets his birthday.

The frown that flickers across his partner's features is quickly brushed away by everyone's excitement at Alec's arrival, but Magnus hesitates.

Something is wrong.

Alec is welcomed into the loft by his friends and family, already the hesitant centre of attention as always. Everyone else continues to get the party into full swing. On cue, beautiful bursts of magic flare up in multi-coloured sparks as planned. Alec jumps visibly. His eyes are widened by surprise.

Something is very wrong.

"Your Alexander has arrived!"

"I can see that, Catarina."

The elegant warlock waves a hand in front of his eyes and snorts.
"How observant you are, my old friend." She scoffs.

Having known Magnus for a considerable amount of time, Catarina has the pleasure of quickly picking up on his unnatural stillness.
"Whatever is the matter, dear?"

Magnus finishes his drink and shrugs, ignoring the bitter taste of whatever hideously blended cocktail Simon had given him. "I'm sure it's nothing. If you'll excuse me, I have to get back to dazzling. If one looks this good, one should make sure there is enough to go around, hm?"

He doesn't wait for an answer. Never once taking his gaze away from Alec - who was grinning and being tackled and hugged by Isabelle and Jace - Magnus steps away from the makeshift bar at the kitchen and begins to push past the already crowded dance floor.

He walks slowly, head tilted and eyes narrowed as he watches the love of his very long life. He knows Alec's movements as well as his own, knows when Alec is feeling insecure, worried, careless or confident. Right now, Magnus feels blinded. There is little of the man he loves standing before him. Alec is smiling, but it doesn't reach his eyes. There is no crinkled corners of the eyes, or lopsided smiling. He stands rigid, like he used to.

Before their story had begun - a beautifully messy tale of love and adventure, spanning years and even worlds - Alec would stand like a soldier. He stood formal, unemotional and driven by the law. He would walk as though his heart was locked inside a box; a box which was being roughly dragged along the floor behind him. He only ever took it out briefly for his brothers and sisters. Never for himself. Loving yourself was a concept as foreign to Alec Lightwood as mortality was to children.

Magnus had brought down those walls little by little, encouraging Alec to treat himself with kindness; the same compassion that he offered to everyone else. Alec Lightwood gifted hope and compassion to everyone save for the one person who needed it most desperately.

Years later and Alec now stood comfortably in his own skin. It had taken a long time, complete with many arguments and a great deal of tears and frustration, but Alec was finally fighting for his own happiness. Magnus had hoped that his love had guided Alec to a safe harbour. Just like how Alec had encouraged Magnus to risk it all for the only worthwhile medicine to the curse of immortality; love. Love was worth it, always.

So why was Alec now standing like a child again? He stood in the loft, surrounded by everyone he cared for, and everyone who adored him in return, yet Magnus had not seen him appear so lost since he was in his youth.

At the back of his memories - and Magnus has many - there are moments which resurface. He tries to push them away, like a bad photograph

one wishes to ignore and burn and erase completely. But he lets them unfold with dread. He begins to remember small moments throughout the year.

This is not the first time.

Flashes of brief memories pierce into his mind. Magnus sees Alec looking confused mid-fight, causing Magnus to quickly react and blast the demon away. When he looks back, Alec is back in action and the rest of the night goes smoothly enough for Magnus to ignore the startled look on his boyfriend's face.

Another memory strikes like a viper. A few months ago. It is the anniversary of Max's death and Magnus and Alec always visit and place colourful flowers and gifts on the grave. Alec is silent during the entire trip, staring vacantly across the graves until Magnus wraps an arm around his waist in concern. Alec jumps and grabs Magnus' arm, looking down at his shaking fingers before seemingly returning to the present. He smiles and Magnus forgets the rest.

Until now.

"Alexander?" He asks, softly reaching out to Alec with open arms. It is now the pivotal moment of truth, and Magnus swears that if something confirms his fears that Alec is not himself, he will die. Immortal or not.

Alec turns from Isabelle, meets Magnus' gaze and breaks into a dazzling smile, one that only appears for his partner. A smile that could keep even the most vengeful evils at bay.

Magnus almost breaks down and weeps into Alec's arms. Fortunately, he keeps a brave face and settles for pulling Alec into a tight embrace and placing soft kisses across his neck and cheeks. When he brushes his lips across Alec's and they part willingly, he desperately loses himself in the familiarity of his softness. They celebrate the rest of the night without a care in the world.

After all, denial has always been Magnus Bane's closest companion.

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"Are you heading out, my love? Those other shadowhunters had better keep you in pristine condition. Well, I do rather like you returning gloriously victorious and sweaty, but preferably with all your organs still intact. Especially my favourite ones."

Alec shakes his head. As always, he is unable to hide his smile. He can read the concern beneath his boyfriend's flirting facade and respects it, just as Magnus respects Alec's quieter displays of emotion. He swings his bow over his shoulder before leaning down to where Magnus is sitting on the sofa and brushing a quick kiss onto his lips.

"I'll be safe." Alec promises.

Magnus swallows and gives him a knowing once-over that promises a deliciously thorough inspection upon Alec's return. Alec's cheeks flush. No matter how many years pass and how many milestones they

achieve as a couple, Magnus will always find new ways to steal his breath and stoke an already burning fire. The undeniable devotion in the looks Magnus throws his way are like magic itself. Alec wonders if he will ever tire of it, and hopes that neither of them ever will-

"Alexander, is there any reason why are you carrying the newspaper in your sheath? Is this a fashion statement that I'm unaware of?"

"What are you talking about?"

Alec reaches behind his back and comes to a still.

"By the angel," He whispers in shock. "I could have sworn these were arrows a moment ago. Is this a trick?" The panic he feels causes his voice to tremble. "Did you do this? It's really not funny. At all."

His worry only grows when Magnus unfolds his legs from the sofa and moves to an alert position. The warlock leans forwards and slowly withdraws the rolled up paper from Alec's weapon case. There is something in his eyes that tugs at Alec's nerves. A quiet sadness in which a 'maybe' has become a 'definitely'.

He quickly decides that he doesn't like this new sadness in his boyfriend's eyes.

"You must've distracted me." Alec tries to joke. "Again."

"No, Alexander-"

"I really must go!"

Magnus' sharp gaze cuts through him like a knife. It's fear; undisguised and unguarded fear. Alec stops mid-sentence.

He tries again, desperately. "Jace is waiting for me, and the Clave want this attack wrapped up pretty quickly and you know how they can be when these things are left open. No," He says firmly, when Magnus opens his mouth to protest. "Goodbye, Magnus. I'll be home soon. We can talk then."

Alec leaves in record time, no extra embraces or teasing. He grabs his arrows, checks that they are in fact arrows, and then flees away from Magnus and his achingly obvious concern.

There's nothing wrong with being a little forgetful. These things happen. He battles his own worries on the way to the rendezvous point outside a club downtown.

Not to shadowhunters, some part of him protests.

He focuses on the upcoming attack and everything else - newspapers, Magnus, foggy memories â€“ blends into the background. He ignores how easy it is to forget.

This can wait.

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"This cannot wait, Alexander. You've been avoiding me for a month now. An entire month. Please, dear. Why won't you listen to me?"

"Because you're worrying over nothing, Magnus. I'm fine."

_He looks so uninhabited. _

Magnus cannot tear his tear-filled eyes away from Alec. He feels a completely mess in comparison to Alec's cold gaze. "Fine? Really?" Magnus asks, incredulous. "And fine is forgetting birthdays and parties and dinner dates? Fine is walking out of the house in the middle of the night and calling from some godforsaken alleyway with absolutely no recollection of how you arrived there?"

He wishes that was it. Wishes that there were no more examples of strange behaviour. However he hadn't mentioned the loss of words in conversations. Or the sudden lack of spatial awareness in Alec's movements. All the bumping into tables and random bruises that went against everything a shadowhunter was trained to analyse.

"Do not tell me you are fine, Alec. Something is going on. We have to find out what."

Running a hand through his hair in frustration, Magnus tries to slow his hectic breathing and calm the feeling of panic burning into every fibre of his body. He begins to pace up and down. "You might be cursed! An old enemy of mine might have found a way to hurt me, through you. Yes. That makes sense. Who have I angered in the last century? I'll call Tessa. Who knows? The point is that we need to start looking."

"For what? A cure to forgetfulness? Stop it. Now. You wouldn't know, Magnus, but these things happen with age. Not all of us have the luxury to avoid growing old."

That brings Magnus to a sudden still. A tear falls. "That was a blow, Alexander." He says softly.

His words cut into the warlock more than any spell or loss he's ever suffered through. He is sure that the cold brutality of Alec's statement will haunt him for years.

_My Alec wouldn't say this. _

Magnus wipes away his tears and turns slowly, forcing himself to take a look at the man he loves. What he sees only brings further tears to his already wet eyes.

Alec looks crestfallen. His eyes are wide and filling with tears. As though the same knife he just plunged into Magnus' heart also went through his own. "By the angel, I'm so sorry. Magnus, Iâ€|. I didn't mean it like that."

The waver in his voice trembles in unquestionable misery. "I know how you've suffered because of your immortality. Forgive me. Oh, god. Forgive meâ€|" Alec's voice cracks completely. He chokes and dissolves into tears, covering his face with his shaking hands. He falls to his knees right there on the floor.

In the process of hurting Magnus, Alec destroys himself too.

Oh, my Alexander.

Magnus rushes towards him with open arms, falling down beside him and wrapping his arms around the trembling man as tightly as they can go. The sharp sting of his words are long-lost and forgotten. Magnus whispers comforting words and presses soft kisses against Alec's face, ignoring the taste of salt from their tears and desperately trying to pick up the pieces of his sanity. His entire world is falling apart, following Alec down hand-in hand through the darkness.

"We'll get through this. Whatever it is, Alec, we will fight it."

"Together?"

"Yes, my love. Together. You and me. The way it should be."

Alec cries for as long as his voice will allow it. They stay on the floor, wrapped in each other's arms.

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Demons are summoned, old allies and friends called, and even the Clave's resources are explored. But no one appears to be targeting Alec or Magnus. There appears to be no trace of any kind of magic on Alec either, much to Magnus' partial dismay and partial relief. If they could only identify the threat causing these changes, that would be a step in the right direction.

It is Isabelle Lightwood who suggests a mundane doctor.

"What?"

"Don't give me that look, big brother. You were right, we have exhausted any possible magical option, but we that's just it."

Magnus and Alec continue to stare blankly at her.

Isabelle sighs. "We should consider human_options. Not just spells and curses and whatnot."

"Butâ€| I have angel blood." Alec protests weakly, and Magnus flinches at the desperation written on his partner's face. He feels it too. Regrets that he was so focused on one angle of what could be universal symptoms of Alec's deteriorating condition.

"Part." Isabelle gently reminds her brother. "We are also mortal." She places a comforting hand against his cheek. "Clary knows a doctor. Very well-esteemed. Someone who really knows her stuff." Until this point, Isabelle had been the voice of reason. Strong and firm. Now, Magnus has to watch as her lip wobbles. "Please, Alec. This could help."

Isabelle's last words are spoken with an anguish which Magnus has been all too familiar with recently. As a high warlock, he

understands that a mundane disease is less easy to cure and far more complicated. Magic can heal wounds and fix bones, but it cannot rebuild what is already fading. He wonders if magic can fix a broken heart. Still, Isabelle is right. Knowing what they are facing is half of the battle.

"I agree with your sister." Magnus reaches for Alec's hand and holds it tightly. "And if this doesn't work, so what? I'll keep searching. I'll search the world for you, Alexander."

Alec looks between Magnus and Isabelle, fear flickering in his eyes. His shoulders slump as he nods, once. "Okay."

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Alzheimer's.

The name sounds more dangerous than any evil Magnus has ever faced. It burns into every page of his unwritten future. It bleeds into the white, fresh pages of what could have been. Of happy endings and children and savouring even the shaking kisses from Alec's aged lips. It all vanishes away. Just like that. The power of a single word has been proven countless times throughout history. A word can start wars and build homes and slaughter innocence.

It isn't the word that kills Magnus, but the three that follow.

"You should prepare."

When Dr. Sinclair sits the pair down after a gruelling month of physical, mental and medical tests, she speaks in a quiet and gentle tone that reveals an irreversible truth. That Magnus may have to prepare for losing Alec a lot sooner than he'd previously thought. If he could choose, he would always have Alec by his side, yet they had agreed upon that impossibility many years ago. How can he prepare to lose his heart forever?

_But he's a shadowhunter. He's strong and healthy and active and beautiful. How did this happen? It can't happen. This cannot be happening. _

I think I've found hell.

Phrases of the doctor's diagnosis pass in and out of his mind. Fragments of 'brain cells dying' and 'declining cognitive abilities' pass in and out of his thoughts. They form new scars in places where Magnus wasn't even aware he could hurt in.

All he focuses on is 'terminal' and everything else fades away.

_Whatever God is up there, I curse you. May you reign forever and lose everything you hold dear to you. _

He comes back to the present only to hold Alec's hand tightly in his. He forces himself - and it takes him minutes to gather up the courage - to glance at Alec. Magnus, who has fought battles and summoned demons and watched good people become bad memories, cannot face the truth.

He expects to see tears, or the furious hard line of Alec's mouth, angry and disbelieving. Instead, Alec is calm. He listens to the kind doctor carefully, asking questions and nodding in understanding.

And then they are leaving, still hand in hand.

What is happening?

Dr. Sinclair hands Magnus a pile of pamphlets and leaflets in bright colours. They scream false promises into his ears. Words that could never ease the pain.

I will never be ready.

Magnus tears them into shreds as soon as they step outside.

"Hey." Alec says softly, so quietly that Magnus barely hears over the sound of his broken heart bleeding angry sobs from his chest. Alec takes the warlock's trembling hands in his and brings them up to his lips, kissing them tenderly. He tenderly tilts Magnus' chin up to meet his gaze.

In that moment, with Magnus looking up at Alec in sheer agony, Alec makes a decision. He pulls his lover into a tight hug and echoes the same hope as he once offered, kissing away the warlock's tears and holding him closer; as though somehow shielding the world and all its illnesses away. He wishes he could defend Magnus' heart like a warrior. But he knows it is too late now. He will soon be another scar.

"I love you." He tells Magnus. It is the only promise he can, and will make, over and over again until he can no longer speak at all. It is the only truth that will not erode over time.

"I love you." He repeats, hoping that one day, after he is gone, it will be enough to ease the pain.

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There are times when it is bearable.

When Alec forgets he is married to a warlock, Magnus gets to watch the delighted shock dance across Alec's face as colourful sparks float around the loft. He is young again, discovering Alec's laughter for the first time. Alec sees magic for the first time, again and again, and Magnus watches with tears in his eyes, torn between a broken heart and renewed adoration.

Isabelle and Jace often play games with their brother while Magnus researches anything he can get his hands on. He never gives up searching for new cures and ways of easing Alec's symptoms. They experiment with runes also, with Clary trying new ones every so often to improve Alec's memory and slow down the brain's insistent slow death. Nothing is permanent, however, and soon Alec dismisses the experiments and insists upon no more talk on the subject.

The Lightwoods set up a training room in the loft, so that Alec can maintain his good health and exercise regularly without leaving. They often spar and workout together, enjoying each other's company for as long as they can. Magnus watches as they bicker and tease, just like

before. He watches them when Alec forgets or lashes out in one of his angry spells, noticing the way that Isabelle gently helps her brother back to himself, coaxing him to calm down and singing a lullaby. Jace holds his parabatai down more firmly, but Magnus watches the way he bites down on his lip to seize its shaking and vows to be a little kinder to Jace in the future.

These times, it is bearable. Just. It is tough and repetitive, but when love drives every thought and action, Magnus finds his life with Alec still as valuable and precious as before. They enjoy their good moments and push through the bad ones.

There are times when it is unbearable. When Alec screams and beats himself, suddenly scared by the unknown runes that mark his body and unable to recognise the places or faces surrounding him. He breaks bones, quickly snapping back to himself in time to scream in pain and collapse to the floor. Of course, Magnus heals them as quickly as he can but the torturous cycle continues. He is almost "almost" grateful for the illness when during one god-awful moment, Alec kicks his sister in the ribs. The cracking of bones echoes in the loft long after they are healed. Alec soon forgets, but Izzy never does, and not for the first time, Magnus admires her bravery; the strength and compassion that drives her on. They cry together that night, when Alec is fast asleep, and end up comforting each other until they too are asleep on the sofa.

One night, Magnus wakes up to Alec standing over him, armed with an arrow aiming at his heart. Magnus considers letting him fire. Would it kill him? Would it ease the pain of watching his Alexander fade away completely? Perhaps he ought to end it, alongside Alec. Death could be their next adventure.

But he reaches out, resting his hands lightly on Alec's waist and pulling him down towards him until their lips are inches apart. He smiles. "My name is Magnus Bane. I don't think we've been formally introduced."

Alec freezes.

"Come back to me, Alexander." Magnus half whispers, half begs. He moves a fingertip over Alec's lower lip. "I love you."

Alec drops the arrow and presses his lips to the warlock's in one fluid movement. When they break apart, Magnus bites back a cry of relief at seeing the familiar warmth back in Alec's eyes.

"Hello again." Magnus grins.

"By the angel, did I hurt you?"

"No. All is well." Magnus shakes his head quickly, pulling Alec into a hug. "Go back to sleep." He whispers into Alec's hair. He holds him tightly until gentle snores echo in the silence.

And then, with Alec in his arms, Magnus finds it bearable once more.

One day, when the inevitable happens and Alec's memories fade completely, and his movements are limited and stilled by time, Magnus will be there. He vows to stay until the end, even when Alec screams

and tears at his own hair just to feel something. Magnus vows to take his lover's bleeding hands into his own and heal them, over and over until all that is left is the love in Alec's eyes.

Magnus knows that love cannot truly die. He rests his chin in the small, warm crook of Alec's shoulder and smiles against the tears.

This is worth everything, he thinks._Love is worth everything._

* * *

><p>See y'all in Hell.</p>

End
file.